

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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R 021530Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8499

UNCLAS PORT AU PRINCE 2147

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EINV, HA
SUBJECT: ASSISTANCE TO U.S. INVESTORS: HAITI

REF: STATE 137186

1. THE EMBASSY HAS BEEN AWARE OF RAWLINGS' POTENTIAL PROBLEMS WITH THE GOH FOR MORE THAN A YEAR, HAS DISCUSSED THE MATTER FREQUENTLY WITH RAWLINGS' LOCAL MANAGEMENT, HAS MET WITH OTHER MANUFACTURERS, AND HAS BROUGHT THE MATTER TO THE ATTENTION OF A NUMBER OF HAITIAN OFFICIALS.

2. THE GOH IS TRYING TO "PERSUADE" THE BASEBALL MANUFACTURERS TO USE MORE HAITIAN MATERIAL IN BASEBALLS. THE MANUFACTURERS HAVE BEEN IMPORTING ALL BASEBALL COMPONENTS ON A DUTY-FREE BASIS. LAST YEAR, A LOCAL BUSINESSMAN OPENED A GLUE BLENDING PLANT AND PERSUADED THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE TO CANCEL DUTY-FREE IMPORT PERMITS FOR GLUE. IN ADDITION, THE GOH MAY SOON CANCEL DUTY-FREE IMPORT PERMITS FOR THE YARN USED TO WIND BASEBALL CORES. THE GOVERNMENT'S DESIRE TO INCREASE THE PERCENTAGE OF HAITIAN VALUE ADDED IN BASEBALL MANUFACTURING IS NOT UNREASONABLE ALTHOUGH THEIR METHODS HAVE BEEN ARBITRARY AND THERE IS LITTLE APPRECIATION OF THE POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF THE ACTIONS.

3. MOST OF THE BASEBALL AND SOFTBALL MANUFACTURERS APPEAR TO FIND THE HAITIAN GLUE ACCEPTABLE FOR MOST OF THEIR PRODUCTS.

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SIMILARLY, ONE MANUFACTURER SAID THAT THE HAITIAN YARN IS ACCEPTABLE BUT NOT AVAILABLE IN ALL NEEDED SIZES. RAWLINGS APPEARS TO BE MORE CONCERNED ABOUT THE HAITIAN GLUE THAN OTHER MANUFACTURERS BECAUSE LACK OF QUALITY CONTROL IN THE BLENDING PROCESS MAKES THE GLUE QUESTIONABLE FOR USE IN THE BASEBALLS IT MANUFACTURES FOR USE BY THE U.S. MAJOR LEAGUES. MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALLS APPARENTLY ACCOUNT FOR ABOUT 50 PER CENT OF RAWLINGS

PRODUCTION.

4. SEVERAL MONTHS AGO, THE EMBASSY'S ECONOMIC OFFICER DISCUSSED THE MATTER WITH RAWLINGS' MANAGER AND SUGGESTED THAT HE WRITE TO THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE, OUTLINE THE PROBLEM, AND REQUEST APPROPRIATE RELIEF. UNFORTUNATELY, HE HAS NOT TAKEN THIS ELEMENTARY STEP AND HAS BEEN TRYING TO RESOLVE THE ISSUE BY HAVING HIS HAITIAN LAWYER NEGOTIATE WITH THE MANAGER OF THE GLUE PLANT* EMBASSY EFFORTS TO HELP RAWLINGS WITH ITS PROBLEMS WOULD, OF COURSE, BE ENHANCED IF RAWLINGS REPRESENTATIVES WOULD PROVIDE THE GOVERNMENT WITH THE INFORMATION NEEDED TO JUSTIFY THE ACTION THEY WANT IT TO TAKE. THE GOH HAS LIMITED PERSONNEL RESOURCES AND EVEN LESS CAPACITY TO PERFORM COMPLICATED STAFF WORK. IT IS IN RAWLINGS' INTEREST TO PUT ITS CASE IN WRITING AND MAKE CERTAIN THAT IT REACHES VARIOUS CABINET OFFICERS.

5. THE EMBASSY RECOMMENDED IN APRIL THAT THE BASEBALL MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION WRITE A LETTER TO THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND SEND COPIES TO OTHER CABINET OFFICIALS AS WELL AS THE EMBASSY. NAMES AND ADDRESSES WERE PROVIDED IN APRIL TO AN AMERICAN MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATION.

6. THE EMBASSY WILL CONTINUE TO PROVIDE APPROPRIATE ASSISTANCE TO THE BASEBALL MANUFACTURERS. THE AMBASSADOR AND ECONOMIC OFFICER LOOK FORWARD TO MEETING WITH THE DELEGATION FROM THE ASSOCIATION IN JUNE.

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